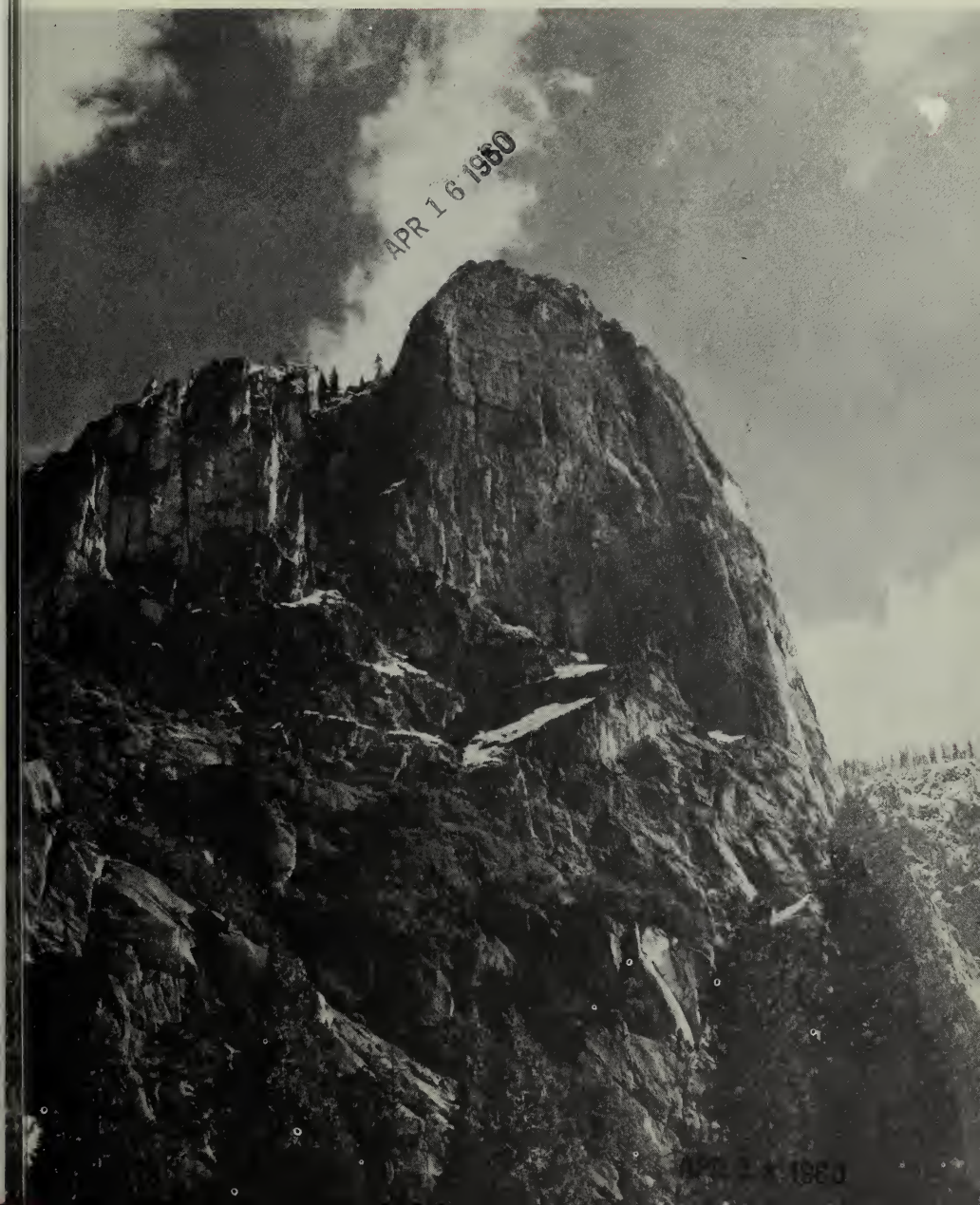
YOSEMITE

VOLUME XXXIX — NUMBER 1 JANUARY 1960



In cooperation with the National Park Service.

—*Anderson, NPS*

Cloud's Rest

COVER — Sentinel Rock —*McCrary, NPS*

yosemite
NATURE NOTES

Since 1922, the monthly publication of the National Park Service and the Yosemite Natural History Association in Yosemite National Park.

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SENSATIONAL YOSEMITE

Allan Shields, Ranger-Naturalist

Superlatives command sensationalism. The highest falls (Yosemite), the broadest exposed granite slope (Tenaya Canyon, below Clouds' Rest), the most inspiring vistas (Glacier Point, Inspiration Point, the summits of Mt. Lyell and Mt. Dana), the smallest tree (alpine willow) create their own sensations — they are what we call a sensation. Or the greatest apparent and immediate dangers are sensational, exemplified by the rock climbers' skilled and courageous ascent of El Capitan, or by the individual pictured in Bunnell's *Discovery of Yosemite* who is doing a handstand out on the edge of the large overhanging rock at Glacier Point. A story is told in our family about earlier days, prior to guard rails around the same rock, that a small girl (named after Ione, California) walked out onto it, only to freeze when the full realization of her location swept her senses. We could count it sensational to be her father at this point, were we faced by the necessity to crawl out and return her to safety.

Probably no one, not even youngsters, will fail to experience exhilaration by contact with these sensational features of the park. Grosser, grander, the more outstanding qualities of Yosemite force themselves on us. Correlated with this fact is another one: that more people have used Yosemite Valley, have visited Inspiration, Washburn, and Glacier Point, than have tried to get below the level of the obvious and well known. No one needs guidance into the obvious. However, if we stop in our park experiences with the obvious, we have cut ourselves off from some of the richest ones Yosemite offers. It may be valuable, therefore, to catalogue some of the ways our senses are bathed in the wilderness, and how we may, by simply being available to awareness, greatly enhance our visits.

—*Anderson, N*

Yosemite Valley

Psychologists, by experiment, can discern these human sense avenues: vision, hearing, tasting, tactile (touch), smelling, kinesthesis (the feel of the pull and push of muscles and tendons), pain, cold and heat. In describing ways in which the park stirs sensation, I am choosing to ignore the enrichment possible through scientific, artistic, religious, social, philosophical, and other resources. I mean to discern the subtleties in the obvious and simply bring them to our attention. That these experiences are common in no way reduces their importance. That fact only increases it.

What sense experiences, therefore, significantly increase our enjoyment of the park, help to recreate our "selves," and stir people to try to make their feelings permanent by taking pictures, by sharing, by talking and writing about them, or simply by returning again and again to repeat them?

Vision provides the readiest form of sensation, is the most dominant avenue for a majority of people. Through the means of sight, often unconsciously, we are delighted by colors and shapes simply for themselves. For example, a dead standing lodgepole pine presents a wide spectrum of greys, yellows, and browns, blended and contrasting, and all set in an intricate flow of wood textures. From a prominence, whole forests can be viewed simply as a sea of varied greens, blacks and browns — not even as trees. Going to another extreme, if we lie on the ground and watch intently the subtle color combinations of pussy paws or monkey flower, we are surprised to learn what we have been missing from our common perspective as erect observers. Who does not delight in bathing his eyes in a field of wild flowers, violently colorful? Through vision we may learn to forget that mountains are mountains,

that domes are granite, and that many have names, and take keen delight in the symphony of variable shapes and colors of them, the repetition of patterns from great to small, the contrasts in forms and textures. The patina (surface quality) of a mountain range is a common delight — but how many of us can see it — intensely?

Hearing, our other distance sense, can be exploited by attending to a selection of sounds that flood us constantly in the mountains. We are so completely adapted to the habit of "tuning out" that we may grow deaf to the obvious and delightful. I think fondly of a great summer experience when I spent a night alone on the summit of Mammoth Peak (Kuna Crest). About 8:00 p.m. the mountain was left breathless as the full moon climbed into the night sky. A devotional silence became a dramatic background that heightened and exaggerated the slightest sound. Under such conditions, interest in the banal sounds is heightened in the extreme. We can learn to create artifically for ourselves similar conditions so that we can enjoy sounds for themselves.

Any list of sounds worth seeking will be limitless, and each can make one of his favorites. Birds, campers chopping wood, picket pin's whistle may be among unique mountain sounds. Let me confine myself simply to water. Yosemite Falls in spring, Happy Isles (almost anytime), a filling bucket, percolating coffee on a Coleman stove, a meadow rivulet, rain freshlets over granite detritus, a snow-water stream falling under large granite blocks, rain and hail hitting the brim of my ranger's hat, the uninhibited booming of Waterwheel Falls in early summer, and the reminiscent late summer trickle of

Kuna Crest with Mammoth Peak on right.

—Anderson, NPS

Yosemite Falls —*Anderson, NPS*

Yosemite Falls. (One relative, not content with stopping Yosemite Falls by holding his hand across the stream, became the Falls by turning and spitting over the brink. Rare presence of mind!)

That mountain food tastes better is a truism. Never mind why it does, the fact alone is universally acknowledged. Tastes as such are rarely explored among plants because 1) few people know which are poisonous and 2) it is against park policy to pick them. But I'm willing to risk some recommendations. Identification of cone-bearing trees in the high country is easy to do by means of needle counting, cones, shapes, etc. Taste of the needle is another means little used. By sampling and comparing flavors of needles you can learn to enjoy their flavor (especially the new white bark pine growth) and can actually come to identify them on taste. One advantage to this method lies in this — if you should ever be descending a mountain blindfolded, you can know your approximate elevation by sampling needles on the way!

Other taste delights you may have missed: the seed of white bark pine or pinon pine, snow from a summit bank, snow water flowing out from a bank, gravel garlic, swamp onion, new fern growth, Laborador tea, miner's lettuce, shield leaf, mountain sorell, — or an increasing favorite, soda water at the Soda Spring in Tuolumne Meadows.

The sense of touch, a surface sense, is easily subject to satiety and may be one of our least conscious experiences. For instance, you do not now, but shortly will, notice the feel of the paper you are holding, or the touch of your clothes on your body, or the sensations of your tongue running over your lips, or lip against lip. Available, yes, but generally not noticed. Some tactile experiences unique in the park include the feel of the sleeping bag as you scruntch into it (we don't "climb" in, or "crawl" in, or "hunch" in, or "scramble" in, do we?), the multiform feel of polished granite surface from gla-

cial action, the textures of weathered wood, the springy feel of a sphagnum moss patch, the vicarious rugged feel of a series of jagged peaks, or a talus slope, pine boughs brushing our bodies, the "soft" feel of water in a mountain lake or river, and the many other vicarious tactile sensations (how it would feel if we did touch) of the coat of mountain coyote, kit fox tail, marmot fur, etc.

Odor delights abound. The forests' piney scent, bear clover, mountain pennyroyal, campfires, meals cooking in the open, the bark of Jeffrey pine on a warm day (vanilla and pineapple, out-pineappling pineapple), swamp onion, even the unique scent of camping gear, or the delicate perfume of mountain spirea — all available, and sometimes many of these mixed happily together in pleasant confusion. Lead on, nose, I follow whither thou goest!

The kinesthetic sense plays a relatively silent role in our sense overture. Usually we become aware of these sensations coupled with pain, as when our muscles are sore or stiff, or we turn an ankle. That this is not always so is clear from this list of kinesthetic pleasures: the feel of the readines of our bodies to respond to exertion, as in climbing a mountain, or simply walking across the meadows; the vicarious experiences of great powers, sometimes remote, as glacier movement, or mountain uplifts and earthquake, or, more immediately, the resistance of rock

Royal Arches and Washington Column

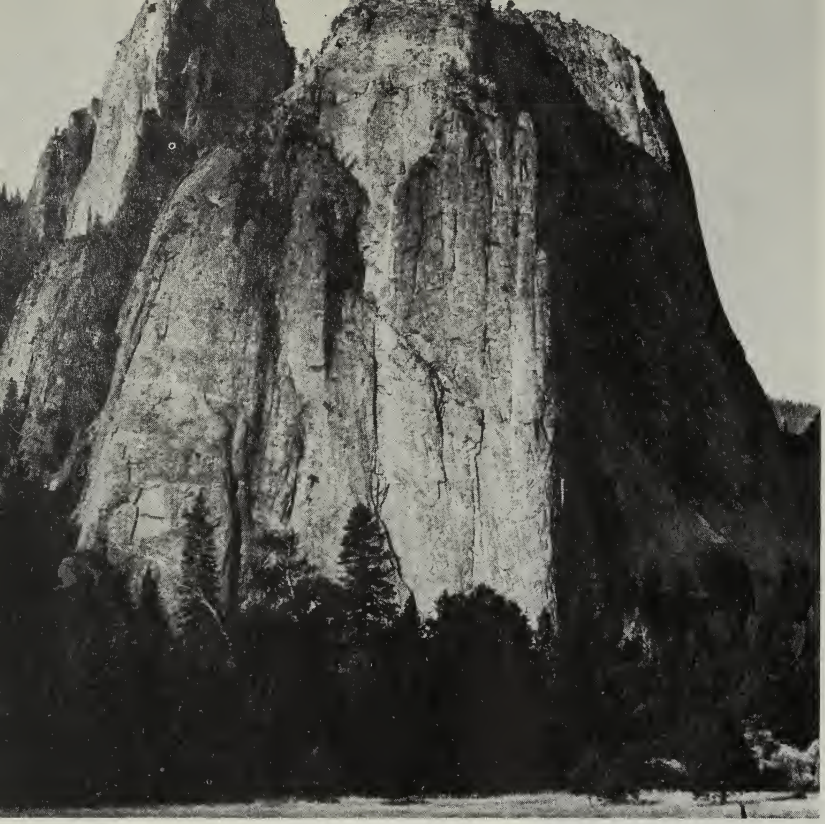
—Anderson, NPS

—*Anderson, NPS*

White Cascade

While the National Parks serve in an important sense as recreation areas, their primary use extends far into that fundamental education that concerns real appreciation of nature. Here beauty in its truest sense receives expression and exerts its influence along with recreation and formal education. To me the parks are not merely places to rest and exercise and learn. They are regions where one penetrates the veil to meet the realities of nature - and to appreciate more fully the unfathomable power behind it.

JOHN C. MERRIAM



Cathedral Rocks

—Anderson, NPS

surface to water forces, or water powers themselves. Lightning striking, thunder rolling, trees crashing, are additional sources of vicarious kinesthetic delights. Personally, I've always been an admirer of tree roots that split boulders, of the grace of chickaree in motion, and of the dexterity (I almost said "manual dexterity") of chipmunk at play, in flight, or manipulating plant seeds.

Finally, pain, cold, and heat require some explanation in a list of delights, for we tend to think of them primarily in association with unpleasant experiences. The fact is that we seek and enjoy many conditions that bring pain, expose us to cold, and cause us to burn — but value such experiences not less but more for these very reasons. Nor do I think we are masochistic as a result!

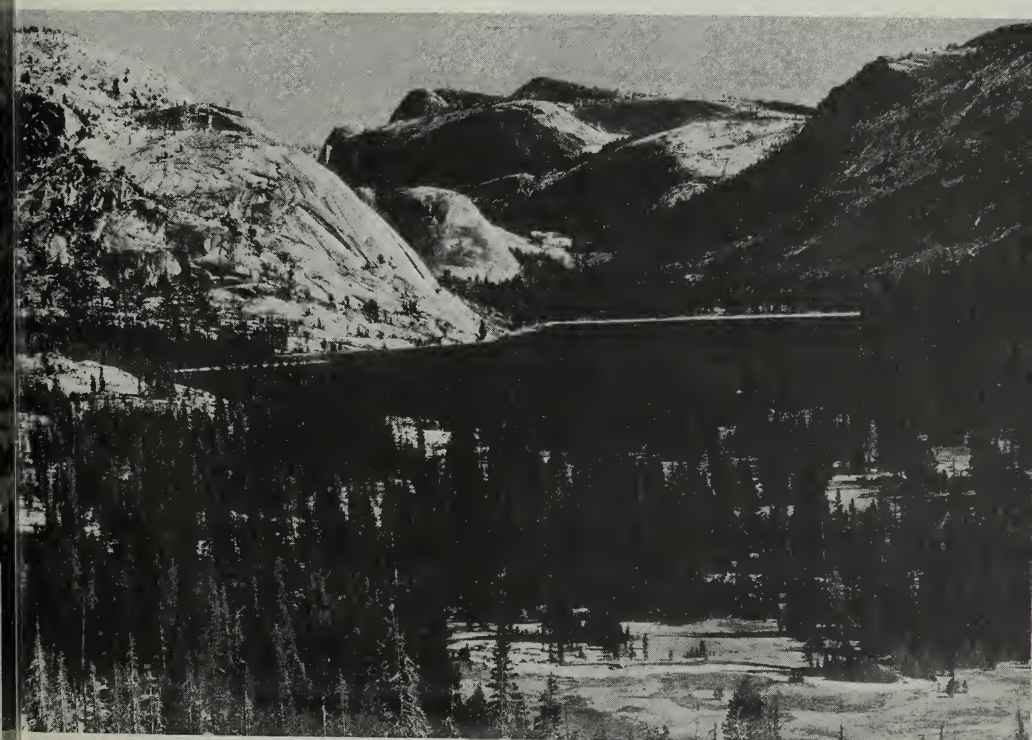
We enjoy the burn of the sun, if not too extreme. I often hear people say, on a hot day, that they like the heat. I believe them. And I have seen groups of people actually revelling in the sharp cold of rain-soaked clothing out on hikes, or eating lunch on Mt. Conness during a driving snow storm thoroughly delighted in their supposed discomforts. As for pain itself, some mountain climbs involve very strenuous exertion bordering on pain, at times clearly painful — and we return the next day to do it all over again. I still recall vividy the happy countenance of a

vice-president of the Bank of America in San Francisco when he came to my tent to bid me good-bye. His face was covered with white paste, his lips were so swollen he couldn't speak, cold sores oozed, his eyes were puffy, hands sunburned, he had been in bed with a cold for two days, and his muscles were so stiff he shuffled after two scheduled naturalist hikes. Rarely has man suffered so much, but in obvious rapture with his experience in the mountains. I think he discovered a man.

We need to remind ourselves of a simple dictum, difficult to practice artfully: Be available to your senses. It makes sense.

Mt. Dana through branches of Lodgepole Pine.

Tenaya Lake

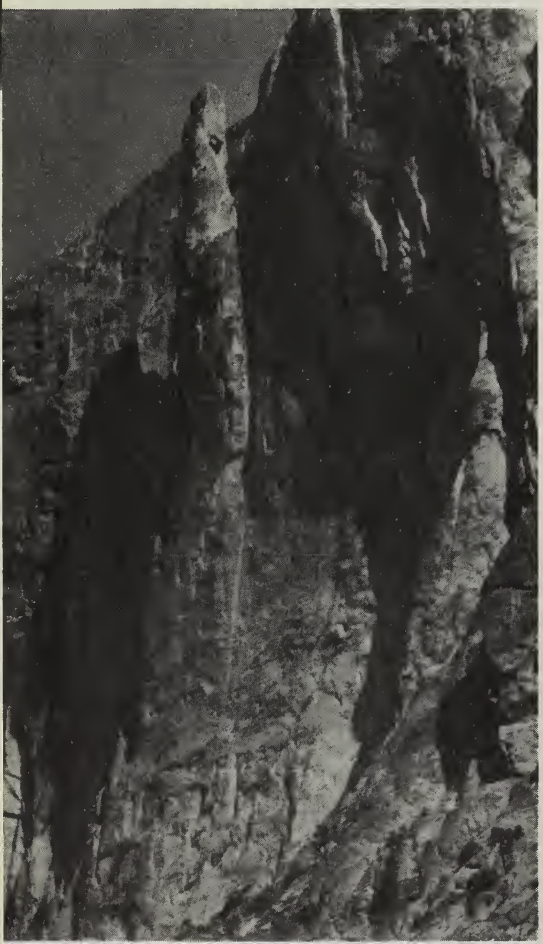


NOTES FROM MY TUOLUMNE JOURNAL

William L. Neely, Ranger-Naturalist

There are some mountaineers who see the mountains as gymnastic exercises. According to the climbing guides a mountain is either "interesting" or "uninteresting" depending upon the problems of getting up. The top is all-important. Thus Mt. Dana is an uninteresting mountain. The Lost Arrow is interesting. That the *Polemonium* grows atop Mt. Dana and not on Lost Arrow is of no concern. At least it has not been reported on Lost Arrow and I haven't been up lately to see.

Lost Arrow
—*Anderson, NPS*



It may be that to them a mountain becomes more interesting in ratio to the number of pitons, expansion bolts, ropes and belays needed. A climb is also put into categories of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th class climbs. Dana is a 1st class climb, meaning any suitable footgear will do. The classes progress into degrees of difficulty and increasing dependence upon blacksmith leavings, until with class 6 one needs direct aid all the way. A vertical wall or overhang with few or no cracks, joints or handholds involves 6th class climbing. You can try this at home. If you want to paint the second story of your house from the outside you will need a ladder. That is direct aid and put yourself down to a 6th class climb.

Then there are mountaineers who are out to "do" the mountains. Once they are "done" they are done, and the climber moves on to a different area. I see in the register on Mt. Dana that one climber "did" Koip, Kuna, and Parker Peaks, and all of Kuna Crest, then crossed over to Mt. Gibbs, thence across the saddle to Mt. Dana. He added he will "do the Conness group tomorrow." Unfortunately some of these peaks have no register on them, so that some of the climbs will be in vain.

This kind of climber must be what Muir called "time poor". He cannot munch and savour a peak and return again for other nibbles. He must skip from peak to peak, get a smattering from each, namely from the

summits, which being the smallest part of the peak is also the most readily comprehensive. The broad base which holds up the top demands too much time. New sensations, new thrills await on the next peak; hop to it.

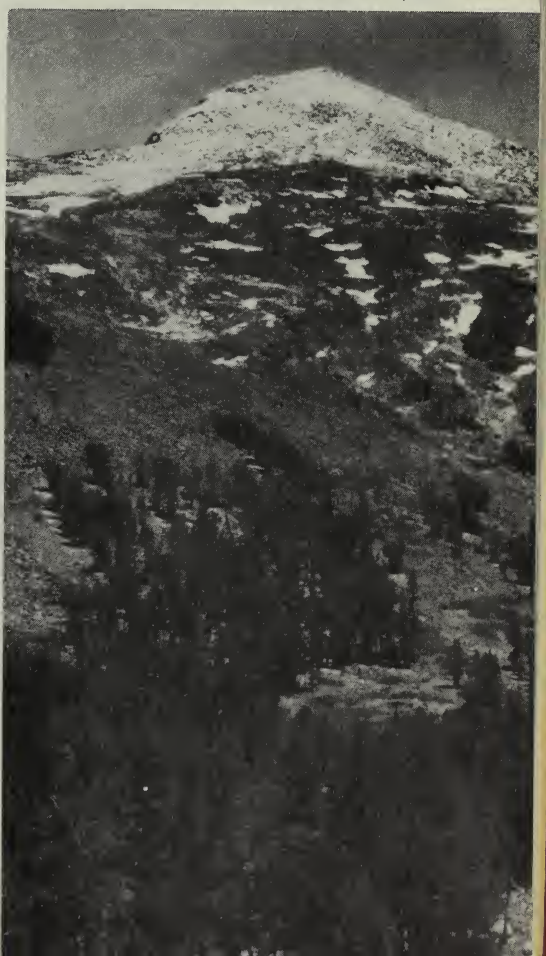
There is the mountaineer who climbs because someone said to come to them and get their glad tidings, who climbs with all the joy and anticipation of youth, yet with the unhurried pace of age, who is not out for conquest of the top, yet finds points and fractures and cracks in the rocks not as hand holds but as anatomy and history of the mountain. He is aware of the mass and depth and age of the mountain, feels the rock as part of the substance, yet also is concerned with the vesture of the slopes, the gardens of wildflowers, the pioneering lichens, and he walks from surprise to surprise.

He may realize that mountains are not upthrust masses of rock but actually remnants of old flat lands that have been chewed away on all sides by water and ice. After the fifteenth climb of Mt. Dana it becomes a familiar and loved friend.

One of the pleasures I had in exploring the Clark Range was the new view I got of old Dana, miles away. The mountain changes its clothes weekly, it seems. One time it is bathed oy stiff, cold winds, the next wek it is swathed in *Phlox, Draba* and *Podistera* blooms.

Dana is a place to be, not a place to conquer. I was pased on the way by some huffity-puffity hikers out to make a record. What sorrowful amusement! How dejected they are if they find their time beaten by two minutes! Time is the essence. If their feet landed upon and crushed a clump of *Polemonium* among the rocks near the top, too bad, there was no time to pick that kind of footing, although the Sky Pilot may have spent a decade establishing its place there. Who climbed Dana a million years ago? It was there then. The first recorded ascent was in 1860. How many have climbed it since? How many have conquered? Is its rocky head bowed in submission? The latest survey of altitudes showed the mountain to be three feet higher than fifty years ago. A marmot is frequently seen there, calmly picking up bits after the climbers' lunches. But he hasn't signed the register yet.

Mt. Dana
—*Anderson, NPS*



1959 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IN YOSEMITE

W. J. and Erma Fitzpatrick

The Christmas Bird Count taken annually in and adjacent to Yosemite National Park, California was conducted on December 29, 1959. The area included the canyon of the Merced River from Mirror Lake in Yosemite Valley west to El Portal, and the rims of Yosemite Valley south to Tempo Dome and north to Big Meadows. Elevations ranged from 2,000 ft. at El Portal to 8,200 ft. at Tempo Dome. Weather conditions were ideal, with clear skies, no wind, and temperatures varying from 27° to 70°.

Seventeen observers, working in four parties, recorded 58 species and 1858 individuals. This compared favorably with last year's count of 60 species and 2,044 individuals, and the 1950-1959 average for this event of 55.4 species and 1972 individuals. The outstanding find was a Goshawk seen over Yosemite Valley near El Capitan. This species, while resident in Yosemite National Park, is rarely reported during the winter months and has never before been recorded on the Christmas Count. The usual widespread interest in this endeavor was evidenced by the fact that participants came from as far distant as San Francisco.

The participants were: Mignon Augsbury, Katharine Coakley, Erma Fitzpatrick, Michael Fitzpatrick, W. J. Fitzpatrick, Douglass Hubbard, Douglass Hubbard, Jr., Dorothy Johnson, James Johnson, Vergena Koller, Paul McCrary, Myron Sutton, Mary Curry Tresidder, Keith Trexler, Ben Twight, Mary Twight, and Robert Upton.

The detailed count follows: Great Blue Heron, 1; Goshawk, 1; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 3; Cooper's Hawk, 2; Red-tailed Hawk, 7; Golden Eagle, 2; Sparrow Hawk, 6; Band-tailed Pigeon, 364; Mourning Dove, 23; Pygmy Owl, 2; White-throated Swift 6; Anna's Hummingbird, 3; Belted Kingfisher, 3; Red-shafted Flicker, 20; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Acorn Woodpecker, 31; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 1; Hairy Wodpecker, 4; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Nuttall's Woodpecker, 2; White-headed Woodpecker, 4; Black Phoebe, 15; Steller's Jay, 194; Scrub Jay, 33; Mountain Chickadee, 54; Plain Titmouse, 30; Common Bushtit, 30; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch 2; Brown Creeper, 3; Wren-tit, 10; Dipper, 15; Winter Wren, 1; Bewick's Wren, 2; Canyon Wren, 4; Rock Wren, 2; Robin, 63; Varied Thrush, 1; Hermit Thrush, 14; Western Bluebird 189; Townsend's Solitaire, 3; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 20; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 10; Hutton's Vireo, 2; Audubon's Warbler, 10; House Sparrow 18; Brewer's Blackbird, 8; Purple Finch, 3; House Finch, 105; Lesser Goldfinch, 2; Rufous-sided Towhee 13; Brown Towhee, 57; Lark Sparrow 1; Slate-colored Junco, 2; Oregon Junco, 222; White-crowned Sparrow 29; Golden-crowned Sparrow, 201; Fox Sparrow, 1.

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